


Phoenician language

Phoenician (/fəˈniːʃən/, *fə-NEE-shən*) is an extinct Canaanite Semitic language originally spoken in the region surrounding the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Extensive Tyro-Sidonian trade and commercial dominance led to Phoenician becoming a lingua-franca of the maritime Mediterranean during the Iron Age. The Phoenician alphabet was spread to Greece during this period, where it became the source of all modern European scripts.

The area in which Phoenician was spoken includes Greater Syria and, at least as a prestige language, Anatolia, specifically the areas now including Lebanon, coastal Syria, coastal northern Israel, parts of Cyprus and some adjacent areas of Turkey.^[4] It was also spoken in the area of Phoenician colonization along the coasts of the southwestern Mediterranean Sea, including those of modern Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Algeria as well as Malta, the west of Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, the Balearic Islands and southernmost Spain.

| Contents |
|---|
| History |
| Writing system |
| Phonology |
| Consonants |
| Sibilants |
| Postvelars |
| Lenition |
| Vowels |
| Suprasegmentals |
| Grammar |
| Nominal morphology |
| Verbal morphology |
| Prepositions and particles |
| Syntax |
| Vocabulary and word formation |
| Survival and influences of Punic |
| Surviving examples |
| See also |
| References |
| Further reading |

| Phoenician | |
|--|--|
| Native to | Canaan; later spoken in coastal outposts and islands throughout the Mediterranean. |
| Era | attested in Phoenicia proper from the 11th century BC to the 2nd century AD ^[1] |
| Language family | <div>Afro-Asiatic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">West Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Central Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Northwest Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">Canaanite<ul style="list-style-type: none">Phoenician</div> |
| Writing system | Phoenician alphabet |
| Language codes | |
| ISO 639-2 | phn (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=359) |
| ISO 639-3 | phn |
| Glottolog | phoe1239 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/phoe1239) <div>Phoenician^[2]</div> phoe1238 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/phoe1238) <div>Phoenician–Punic^[3]</div> |
| <div></div> | |
| <div>Distribution of the Phoenician language</div> | |

History

The Phoenicians were the first state-level society to make extensive use of the Semitic alphabet. The Phoenician alphabet is the oldest verified consonantal alphabet, or *abjad*.^[5] It has become conventional to refer to the script as "Proto-Canaanite" until the mid-11th century BC, when it is first attested on inscribed bronze arrowheads, and as "Phoenician" only after 1050 BC.^[6] The Phoenician phonetic alphabet is generally believed to be at least the partial ancestor of almost all modern alphabets.

From a traditional linguistic perspective, Phoenician was composed of a variety of dialects.^{[7][8]} However, the very slight differences in language and the insufficient records of the time make it unclear whether Phoenician formed a separate and united dialect or was merely a superficially defined part of a broader language continuum. Through their maritime trade, the Phoenicians spread the use of the alphabet to Northwest Africa and Europe, where it was adopted by the Greeks. Later, the Etruscans adopted a modified version for their own use, which, in turn, was modified and adopted by the Romans and became the Latin alphabet.^[9]



The most important Phoenician trade routes and cities in the Mediterranean Basin

Punic colonisation spread Phoenician to the western Mediterranean, where the distinct Punic language developed. Punic also died out, but it seems to have survived far longer than Phoenician, perhaps into the 9th century AD.^[10]

Writing system

Phoenician was written with the Phoenician script, an *abjad* (consonantary) originating from the Proto-Canaanite alphabet that also became the basis for the Greek alphabet and, via an Etruscan adaptation, the Latin alphabet. The Punic form of the script gradually developed somewhat different and more cursive letter shapes; in the 3rd century BC, it also began to exhibit a tendency to mark the presence of vowels, especially final vowels, with an aleph or sometimes an ayin. Furthermore, around the time of the Second Punic War, an even more cursive form began to develop,^[11] which gave rise to a variety referred to as Neo-Punic and existed alongside the more conservative form and became predominant some time after the destruction of Carthage (c. 149 BC).^[12] Neo-Punic, in turn, tended to designate vowels with matres lectionis ("consonantal letters") more frequently than the previous systems had and also began to systematically use different letters for different vowels,^[12] in the way explained in more detail below. Finally, a number of late inscriptions from what is now Constantine, Algeria dated to the first century BC make use of the Greek alphabet to write Punic, and many inscriptions from Tripolitania, in the third and fourth centuries AD use the Latin alphabet for that purpose.^[13]

In Phoenician writing, unlike that of *abjads* such as those of Aramaic, Biblical Hebrew and Arabic, even long vowels remained generally unexpressed, regardless of their origin (even if they originated from diphthongs, as in **bt** /beːt/ 'house'; Hebrew spelling has **byt**). Eventually, Punic writers began to implement systems of marking of vowels by means of *matres lectionis*. In the 3rd century BC appeared the practice of using final 'ālep א to mark the presence of any final vowel and, occasionally, of yōd י to mark a final long [iː].

Later, mostly after the destruction of Carthage in the so-called "Neo-Punic" inscriptions, that was supplemented by a system in which wāw 𐤆 denoted [u], yōd 𐤃 denoted [i], 'ālep 𐤀 denoted [e] and [o], 'ayin 𐤁 denoted [a]^[14] and hē 𐤅 and hēt 𐤆 could also be used to signify [a].^[15] This latter system was used first with foreign words and was then extended to many native words as well.

A third practice reported in the literature is the use of the consonantal letters for vowels in the same way as had occurred in the original adaptation of the Phoenician alphabet to Greek and Latin, which was apparently still transparent to Punic writers: hē 𐤅 for [e] and 'ālep 𐤀 for [a].^[16]

Later, Punic inscriptions began to be written in the Latin alphabet, which also indicated the vowels. Those later inscriptions, in addition with some inscriptions in Greek letters and transcriptions of Phoenician names into other languages, represent the main source of knowledge about Phoenician vowels.

Phonology

Consonants

The Phoenician orthography (see *Phoenician alphabet*) distinguishes the following consonants^[17] (the standard transliteration of the corresponding Phoenician graphemes is marked in **bold**):^[18]

| | | Labial | Dental | Alveolar | | Palatal | Velar | Uvular | Pharyngeal | Glottal |
|-------------|-----------|--------|--------|----------|----------|---------|-------|--------|------------|---------|
| | | | | Plain | Emphatic | | | | | |
| Nasal | | m m | | n n | | | | | | |
| Stop | Voiceless | p p | | t t | | | k k | q q | | ʔ ʔ |
| | Voiced | b b | | d d | | | g g | | | |
| Affricate | Voiceless | | | ʈs s | | | | | | |
| | Voiced | | | ɖz z | | | | | | |
| Fricative | Voiceless | | θ t | s s | | ʃ š | x ḥ | | | h h |
| | Voiced | | | | | | | | ʕ ʕ | |
| Trill | | | | r r | | | | | | |
| Approximant | | | | l l | | j y | w w | | | |

The system reflected in the abjad above is the product of several mergers. From Proto-Northwest Semitic to Canaanite, *š and *t have merged into *š, *d and *z have merged into *z, and *ṭ, *ś and *š have merged into *š. Next, from Canaanite to Phoenician, the sibilants *ś and *š were merged as *š, *ḥ and *ḥ were merged as ḥ, and *ʕ and *ḡ were merged as *ʕ.^{[19][18]} These latter developments also occurred in Biblical Hebrew at one point or another.

Sibilants

The original value of the Proto-Semitic sibilants, and accordingly of their Phoenician counterparts, is disputed. Recent scholarship argues that š was [s], s was [ts], z was [dz], and ś was [tsʰ],^[20] against the traditional sound values of [ʃ], [s], [z], and [sʰ] as reflected in the transcription.^[21]

On the other hand, it is debated whether šin 𐤑 and sāmek 𐤓, which are mostly well distinguished by the Phoenician orthography, also eventually merged at some point, either in Classical Phoenician or in Late Punic.^[22] Krahmalkov suggests that *z may have been [dz] or even [zd] based on Latin transcriptions such as *esde* for the demonstrative 𐤍 𐤔.^[18]

Postvelars

In later Punic, the laryngeals and pharyngeals seem to have been entirely lost. Neither these nor the emphatics could be adequately represented by the Latin alphabet, but there is also evidence to that effect from Punic script transcriptions.

Lenition

There is no consensus on whether Phoenician-Punic ever underwent the lenition of stop consonants that happened in most other Northwest Semitic languages such as Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic (cf. Hackett^[19] vs Segert^[23] and Lyavdansky).^[24] The consonant /p/ may have been *generally* transformed into /f/ in Punic and in late Phoenician, as it was in Proto-Arabic.^[24] Certainly, Latin-script renditions of late Punic include many spirantized transcriptions with *ph*, *th* and *kh* in various positions (although the interpretation of these spellings is not entirely clear) as well as the letter *f* for the original *p.^[25] However, in Neo-Punic, *b lenited to v contiguous to a following consonant, as in the Latin transcription *lifnim* for 𐤋𐤍𐤏𐤍 *lbnm "for his son".^[18]

Vowels

Knowledge of the vowel system is very imperfect because of the characteristics of the writing system. During most of its existence, Phoenician writing showed no vowels at all, and even as vowel notation systems did eventually arise late in its history, they never came to be applied consistently to native vocabulary. It is thought that Phoenician had the short vowels /a/, /i/, /u/ and the long vowels /a:/, /i:/, /u:/, /e:/, /o:/.^{[19][26]} The Proto-Semitic diphthongs /aj/ and /aw/ are realized as /e:/ and /o:/. That must have happened earlier than in Biblical Hebrew since the resultant long vowels are not marked with the semivowel letters (*bēt* "house" was written 𐤁𐤕 *bt*, in contrast to Biblical Hebrew בֵּית *byt*).

The most conspicuous vocalic development in Phoenician is the so-called Canaanite shift, partly shared by Biblical Hebrew, but going further in Phoenician. The Proto-Northwest Semitic /a:/ and /aw/ became not merely /o:/ as in Tiberian Hebrew, but /u:/. Stressed Proto-Semitic /a/ became Tiberian Hebrew /ɔ:/ (/a:/ in other traditions), but Phoenician /o:/. The shift is proved by Latin and Greek transcriptions like *rūs* for "head, cape" (Tiberian Hebrew *rōš*, 𐤕𐤓), *samō* for "he heard" (Tiberian Hebrew *šāmā* , 𐤑𐤌𐤕); similarly the word for "eternity" is known from Greek transcriptions to have been *‘ulōm*, corresponding to Biblical Hebrew *‘olām* and Proto-Semitic *‘ālam*. The letter Y used for words such as *ys* "which" and *yth* (definite accusative marker) in Greek and Latin alphabet inscriptions can be interpreted as denoting a reduced schwa vowel^[16] that occurred in pre-stress syllables in verbs and two syllables before stress in nouns and adjectives,^[27] while other instances of Y as in *chyl* and even *chil* for /kull/ "all" in *Poenulus* can be interpreted as a further stage in the vowel shift resulting in fronting ([y]) and even subsequent delabialization of /u/ and /u:/.^{[27][28]} Short /*i/ in originally-open syllables was lowered to [e] and was also lengthened if it was accented.^[27]

Suprasegmentals

Stress-dependent vowel changes indicate that stress was probably mostly final, as in Biblical Hebrew.^[29] Long vowels probably occurred only in open syllables.^[30]

Grammar

As is typical for the Semitic languages, Phoenician words are usually built around consonantal roots and vowel changes are used extensively to express morphological distinctions. However, unlike most Semitic languages, Phoenician preserved numerous uniconsonantal and biconsonantal roots inherited from Proto-Afro-Asiatic: compare the verbs **kn** "to be" vs Arabic **kwn**, **mt** "to die" vs Hebrew and Arabic **mwt** and **sr** "to remove" vs Hebrew **srr**.^[31]

Nominal morphology

Nouns are marked for gender (masculine and feminine), number (singular, plural and vestiges of the dual) and state (absolute and construct, the latter being nouns that are followed by their possessors) and also have the category definiteness. There is some evidence for remains of the Proto-Semitic genitive grammatical case as well. While many of the endings coalesce in the standard orthography, inscriptions in the Latin and Greek alphabet permit the reconstruction of the noun endings, which are also the adjective endings, as follows:^[32]

| | | Singular | Dual | Plural |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------|--------------|-----------|
| Masculine | Absolute | Ø | 𐤌 m /-ēm/ | 𐤌 m /-īm/ |
| | Construct | Ø | Ø /-ē/ | Ø /-ē/ |
| Feminine | Absolute | + t /-(a/i/o)t/ | 𐤌+ tm /-tēm/ | + t /-ūt/ |
| | Construct | + t /-(a/i/o)t/ | 𐤌+ tn /-tēn/ | + t /-ūt/ |

In late Punic, the final /-t/ of the feminine was apparently dropped: +𐤌𐤕𐤓𐤁 **hmlkt** "son of the queen" or +𐤌𐤕𐤓𐤁𐤕 **'hmlkt** "brother of the queen" rendered in Latin as HIMILCO.^{[28][33]} /n/ was also assimilated to following consonants: e.g. **št** "year" for earlier */sant/.^[28]

The case endings in general must have been lost between the 9th century BC and the 7th century BC: the personal name rendered in Akkadian as **ma-ti-nu-ba-'a-li** "Gift of Baal", with the case endings **-u** and **-i**, was written **ma-ta-an-ba-'a-al** two centuries later. However, evidence has been found for a retention of the genitive case in the form of the first-singular possessive suffix: **'by** / 'abiya/ "of my father" vs **'b** / 'abī/ "my father". If true, this may suggest that cases were still distinguished to some degree in other forms as well.

The written forms and the reconstructed pronunciations of the personal pronouns are as follows:^[34]

Singular:

1st: / 'anōkī/ **'nk** (Punic sometimes **'nky**), also attested as / 'anek/

2nd masc. / 'atta(:)/ **'t**

2nd fem. / 'atti(:)/ **'t**

3rd masc. /hu ' / **h'**, also [hy] (?) **hy** and /hu 'at/ **h't**

3rd fem. /hi ' / **h'**

Plural:

1st: / 'anaḥnū/ **'nḥn**

2nd masc. unattested

2nd fem. unattested
3rd masc. /hummat/ **hmt**,
3rd fem. /himmat/ **hmt**

Enclitic personal pronouns were added to nouns (to encode possession) and to prepositions, as shown below for "Standard Phoenician" (the predominant dialect, as distinct from the Byblian and the late Punic varieties). They appear in a slightly different form depending on whether or not they follow plural-form masculine nouns (and so are added after a vowel). The former is given in brackets with the abbreviation a.V.

Singular:

1st: /-ī/ **Ø**, also **y** (a.V. /-ayy/ **y**)
2nd masc. /-ka(:)/ **k**
2nd fem. /-ki(:)/ **k**
3rd masc. /-o :/ **Ø**, Punic ' (a.V. /-ēyu(:)/ **y**)
3rd fem. /-a :/ **Ø**, Punic ' (a.V. /-ēya(:)/ **y**)

Plural:

1st: /-o(:)n/ **n**
2nd masc. unattested
2nd fem. unattested
3rd masc. /-o(:)m/ **m** (a.V. /-nōm/ **nm**)
3rd fem. /-e(:)m/ **m** (a.V. /-nēm/ **nm**)

In addition, according to some research, the same written forms of the enclitics that are attested after vowels are also found after a singular noun in what must have been the genitive case (which ended in /-i/, whereas the plural version ended in /-ē/). Their pronunciation can then be reconstructed somewhat differently: first-person singular /-iya(:)/ **y**, third-person singular masculine and feminine /-iyu(:)/ **y** and /-iya(:)/ **y**. The third-person plural singular and feminine must have pronounced the same in both cases, i.e. /-nōm/ **nm** and /-nēm/ **nm**.

These enclitic forms vary between the dialects. In the archaic Byblian dialect, the third person forms are **h** and **w** /-ō/ for the masculine singular (a.V. **w** /-ēw/), **h** /-aha(:)/ for the feminine singular and **hm** /-hum(ma)/ for the masculine plural. In late Punic, the 3rd masculine singular is usually /-im/ **m**.

The same enclitic pronouns are also attached to verbs to denote direct objects. In that function, some of them have slightly divergent forms: first singular /-nī/ **n** and probably first plural /-nu(:)/.

The near demonstrative pronouns ("this") are written, in standard Phoenician, **z** for the singular and 'l for the plural. Cypriot Phoenician displays 'z instead of **z**. Byblian still distinguishes, in the singular, a masculine **zn** / **z** from a feminine **zt** / **z**'. There are also many variations in Punic, including **st** and **zt** for both genders in the singular. The far demonstrative pronouns ("that") are identical to the independent third-person pronouns. The interrogative pronouns are /miya/ or perhaps /mi/ **my** "who" and /mū/ **m** "what". An indefinite pronoun "anything" is written **mmm**. The relative pronoun is a š, either followed or preceded by a vowel.

The definite article was /ha-/, and the first consonant of the following word was doubled. It was written **h** but in late Punic also ' and ' because of the weakening and coalescence of the gutturals. Much as in Biblical Hebrew, the initial consonant of the article is dropped after the prepositions **b**-, **l**- and **k**; it could also be lost after various other particles and function words, such the direct object marker 'yt and the conjunction **w**- "and".

Of the cardinal numerals from 1 to 10, 1 is an adjective, 2 is formally a noun in the dual and the rest are nouns in the singular. They all distinguish gender: 'hd, šnm/ 'šnm^[35] (construct state šn/ 'šn), šlš, 'rb ', ħmš, šš, šb ', šmn(h), tš ', 'sr/ 'šr^{[36][37]} vs 'ħt, unattested, šlšt, 'rb 't, ħmšt, ššt, šb 't, šmnt,^[38]

unattested, *ʿšrt*.^[39] The tens are morphologically masculine plurals of the ones: *ʿsrm/ʿšrm*,^{[37][40]} *šlšm*, *ʿrb ʿm*, *ḥmšm*, *ššm*, *šb ʿm*, *šnm*, *tš ʿm*. "One hundred" is *m ʿt*, two hundred is its dual form *m ʿtm*, whereas the rest are formed as in *šlš m ʿt* (three hundred). One thousand is *ʿlp*. Ordinal numerals are formed by the addition of **iy -y*.^[41] Composite numerals are formed with *w-* "and", e.g. *ʿsr w šnm* for "twelve".

Verbal morphology

The verb inflects for person, number, gender, tense and mood. Like for other Semitic languages, Phoenician verbs have different "verbal patterns" or "stems", expressing manner of action, level of transitivity and voice. The perfect or suffix-conjugation, which expresses the past tense, is exemplified below with the root **q-t-l** "to kill" (a "neutral", G-stem).^{[42][43]}

Singular:

1st: */qatalī/ qtlty*

2nd masc. */qaltā/ qtl*

2nd fem. */qalt(i)/ qtl*

3rd masc. */qatōl/ qtl*

3rd fem. */qatalō(t)/ qtl*,^[44] also *qtl*, Punic *qtl ʿ*

Plural:

1st: */qatalnū/ qtl*

2nd masc. unattested

2nd fem. unattested

3rd masc. *qatalū/ qtl*, Punic *qtl ʿ*

3rd fem. unattested

The imperfect or prefix-conjugation, which expresses the present and future tense (and which is not distinguishable from the descendant of the Proto-Semitic jussive expressing wishes), is exemplified below, again with the root **q-t-l**.

1st: */ʾiqtul/ ʾqtl*

2nd masc. */tiqtul/ tqtl*

2nd fem. */tiqtulī/ tqtly*

3rd masc. */yiqtul/ yqtl*

3rd fem. */tiqtul/ tqtl*

Plural: 1st: **/niqtul/? *nqtl*

2nd masc. */tiqtulū/ *tqtl*, Punic **tqtl ʿ*

2nd fem. */tiqtulna/ tqtl*

3rd masc. *yiqtulū/ yqtl*

3rd fem. unattested

The imperative endings were presumably */-Ø/*, */-ī/* and */-ū/*^[44] for the second-person singular masculine, second-person singular feminine and second-person plural masculine respectively, but all three forms surface in the orthography as *qtl*: - Ø. The old Semitic jussive, which originally differed slightly from the prefix conjugation, is no longer possible to separate from it in Phoenician with the present data.

The non-finite forms are the infinitive construct, the infinitive absolute and the active and passive participles. In the G-stem, the infinitive construct is usually combined with the preposition **l-** "to", as in */liqtul/* "to kill"; in contrast, the infinitive absolute (*qatōl*)^[45] is mostly used to strengthen the meaning of a subsequent finite verb with the same root: *ptḥ ptḥ* "you will indeed open!",^[44] accordingly */*qatōl tiqtul/* "you will indeed kill!".

The participles had, in the G-stem, the following forms:

Active:

Masculine singular /qūtel/^[44] or /qōtil/ **qtl**, plural /qotlim/^[44] or /qōtilīm/ **qtl**

Feminine singular **qtl̄t**, plural ***qtl̄t**

Passive:

Masculine singular /qatūl/^[44] or /qatīl/^[46] **qtl**, plural /qatūlīm/ **qtlm**

Feminine singular **qtl̄t**, plural /qatūlōt/ **qtl̄t**

The missing forms above can be inferred from the correspondences between the Proto-Northwest Semitic ancestral forms and the attested Phoenician counterparts: the PNWS participle forms are */qātil-, qātilīma, qātil(a)t, qātilāt, qatūl, qatūlīm, qatult or qatūlat, qatūlāt/.

The derived stems are:

- the N-stem (functioning as a passive), e.g. **nqtl**, the N-formant being lost in the prefix conjugation while assimilating and doubling the first root consonant (**yqtl**).
- the D-stem (functioning as a factitive): the forms must have been /qittil/ in the suffix conjugation, /yaqattil/ in the prefix conjugation, /qattil/ in the imperative and the infinitive construct, /qattōl/ in the infinitive absolute and /maqattil/ in the participle. The characteristic doubling of the middle consonant is only identifiable in foreign alphabet transcriptions.
- the C-stem (functioning as a causative): the original *ha- prefix has produced *yi- rather than the Hebrew *hi-. The forms were apparently /yiqtil/ in the suffix conjugation (/ 'iqtil/ in late Punic), /yaqtil/ in the prefix conjugation, and the infinitive is also /yaqtil/, while the participle was probably /maqtil/ or, in late Punic at least, /miqtil/.^[47]

Most of the stems apparently also had passive and reflexive counterparts, the former differing through vowels, the latter also through the infix **-t-**. The G stem passive is attested as **qytl**, /qytl/ < */qutal/.,^[44] t-stems can be reconstructed as /yitqatil/ **ytqtl** (tG) and /yiqtatil/ (Dt) **yqtl**.^[48]

Prepositions and particles

Some prepositions are always prefixed to nouns, deleting, if present, the initial /h/ of the definite article: such are **b-** "in", **l-** "to, for", **k-** "as" and **m-** /min/ "from". They are sometimes found in forms extended through the addition of **-n** or **-t**. Other prepositions are not like that: **'l** "upon", **'d** "until", **'hr** "after", **tht** "under", **b(y)n** "between". New prepositions are formed with nouns: **lpn** "in front of", from **l-** "to" and **pn** "face". There is a special preposited marker of a definite object **'yt** (/ 'iyyūt/?), which, unlike Hebrew, is clearly distinct from the preposition **'t** (/ 'itt/).

The most common negative marker is **bl** (/bal/), negating verbs but sometimes also nouns; another one is **'y** (/ 'ī/), expressing both nonexistence and the negation of verbs. Negative commands or prohibitions are expressed with **'l** (/ 'al/). "Lest" is **lm**. Some common conjunctions are **w** (originally perhaps /wa-?/, but certainly /u-/ in Late Punic), "and" **'m** (/ 'im/), "when", and **k** (/kī/), "that; because; when". There was also a conjunction (**'p**) (/ 'ap/"also". **l-** (/lū, li/) could (rarely) be used to introduce desiderative constructions ("may he do X!"). **l-** could also introduce vocatives. Both prepositions and conjunctions could form compounds.^[49]

Syntax

The basic word order is verb-subject-object. There is no verb "to be" in the present tense; in clauses that would have used a copula, the subject may come before the predicate. Nouns precede their modifiers, such as adjectives and possessors.

Sarcophagus inscription of Tabnit of Sidon, 5th century BC^{[50][51]}

[illegible]1st century BC^[52]

| Text | Reconstruction (by Igor Diakonov) ^[52] |
|---|---|
| <p>ΛΑΔΟΥΝ ΛΥΒΑΛ ΑΜΟΥΝ ΟΥ ΛΥΡΥΒΑΘΩΝ ΘΙΝΙΘ ΦΑΝΕ ΒΑΛ ΥΣ ΝΑΔΩΡ ΣΩΣΙΠΑΤΙΟΣ ΒΥΝ ΖΟΠΥΡΟΣ ΣΑΜΩ ΚΟΥΛΩ ΒΑΡΑΧΩ</p> | <p>l' dn lb 'l ḥmn wlrbtn tnt pn b 'l 'š ndr S. bn Z. šm' kl' brk'</p> |
| Translation | |
| <p>To the master Baal Hammon and to our mistress Tanit, the face of Baal, [that] which consecrated Sosipatius, son of Zopyrus. He heard his voice and blessed him.</p> | |

Survival and influences of Punic

The significantly-divergent later form of the language that was spoken in the Tyrian Phoenician colony of Carthage is known as Punic and remained in use there for considerably longer than Phoenician did in Phoenicia itself by arguably surviving into Augustine of Hippo's time. The Punic throughout its existence co-existed with the Berber language which is native to Tunisia (Including Carthage) and North Africa. Punic disappeared some time after the destruction of Carthage by the Romans and the Berbers. It is possible that Punic may have survived the Muslim conquest of the Maghreb in some small isolated area: the geographer al-Bakri describes a people speaking a language that was not Berber, Latin or Coptic in the city of Sirte in rural Ifriqiya, a region in which spoken Punic survived well past its written use.^[53] However, it is likely that arabization of the Punics was facilitated by their language belonging to the same group (both being Semitic languages) as that of the conquerors and thus having many grammatical and lexical similarities. Most Punic speakers may have been linguistically Berberized and/or Latinized after the fall of Carthage.

The ancient Libyco-Berber alphabet that is still in irregular use by modern Berber groups such as the Tuareg is known by the native name Tifinagh, possibly a derived form of a cognate of the name "Punic". Still, a direct derivation from the Phoenician-Punic script is debated and far from established since the two writing systems are very different. As far as language (not the script) is concerned, some borrowings from Punic appear in modern Berber dialects: one interesting example is *agadir* "wall" from Punic *gader*.

Perhaps the most interesting case of Punic influence is that of the name of Hispania (the Iberian Peninsula, comprising Portugal and Spain), which, according to one of the theories, is derived from the Punic *I-Shaphan* meaning "coast of hyraxes", in turn a misidentification on the part of Phoenician explorers of its numerous rabbits as hyraxes. Another case is the name of a tribe of hostile "hairy people" that Hanno the Navigator found in the Gulf of Guinea. The name given to those people by Hanno the Navigator's interpreters was transmitted from Punic into Greek as *gorillai* and was applied in 1847 by Thomas S. Savage to the western gorilla.

Surviving examples

Phoenician, together with Punic, is primarily known from approximately 10,000 surviving inscriptions,^[54] supplemented by occasional glosses in books written in other languages. In addition to their many inscriptions, the Phoenicians are believed to have left numerous other types of written sources, but most have not survived.

The Phoenician alphabetic script was easy to write on papyrus or parchment sheets, and the use of these materials explains why virtually no Phoenician writings – no history, no trading records – have come down to us. In their cities by the sea, the air and soil were damp, and papyrus and leather moldered and rotted away. Thus disappeared the literature of the people who taught a large portion of the earth's population to write. The only written documents of Phoenicians and Carthaginians are monumental inscriptions on stone, a few ephemeral letters or notes on pieces of broken pottery, and three fragmentary papyri. Thus, no Tyrian primary sources dating from Hiram I's time are available.^[55]

Roman authors, such as Sallust, allude to some books written in the Punic language, but none have survived except occasionally in translation (e.g., Mago's treatise) or in snippets (e.g., in Plautus' plays). The Cippi of Melqart, a bilingual inscription in Ancient Greek and Carthaginian discovered in Malta in 1694, was the key which allowed French scholar Jean-Jacques Barthélemy to decipher and reconstruct the alphabet in 1758.^[56]

Even as late as 1837 only 70 Phoenician inscriptions were known to scholars. These were compiled in Wilhelm Gesenius's *Scripturae linguaeque Phoeniciae monumenta*, which comprised all that was known of Phoenician by scholars at that time.

Basically, its core consists of the comprehensive edition, or re-edition of 70 Phoenician and some more non-Phoenician inscriptions... However, just to note the advances made in the nineteenth century, it is noteworthy that Gesenius' precursor Hamaker, in his *Miscellanea Phoenicia* of 1828, had only 13 inscriptions at his disposal. On the other hand only 30 years later the amount of Phoenician inscribed monuments had grown so enormously that Schröder in his compendium *Die phönizische Sprache. Entwurf einer Grammatik nebst Sprach- und Schriftproben* of 1869 could state that Gesenius knew only a quarter of the material Schröder had at hand himself.^[57]

Some key surviving inscriptions of Phoenician are:

- Ahiram sarcophagus
- Bodashtart
- Çineköy inscription
- Cippi of Melqart
- Eshmunazar II sarcophagus
- Karatepe
- Kilamuwa Stela
- Nora Stone
- Pyrgi Tablets
- Temple of Eshmun

Since bilingual tablets with inscriptions in both Etruscan and Phoenician dating from around 500 BC were found in 1964, more Etruscan has been deciphered through comparison to the more fully understood Phoenician.

See also

- Punic language
- Phoenician alphabet
- Emerald Tablet
- Extinct language
- List of extinct languages of Asia

References

1. Holmstedt, Robert (2017), "Phoenician" in *A Companion to Ancient Phoenicia*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 1
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Phoenician" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/phoe1239>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Phoenician–Punic" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/phoe1238>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.

4. Lipiński, Edward (2004). *Itineraria Phoenicia* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=SLSzNfdcqfoC>). pp. 139–41. ISBN 9789042913448.
5. Fischer, Steven Roger (2004). *A history of writing*. Reaktion Books. p. 90.
6. Markoe, Glenn E., *Phoenicians*. University of California Press. ISBN 0-520-22613-5 (2000) (hardback) p. 111.
7. Glenn Markoe. *Phoenicians*. p. 108. University of California Press, 2000.
8. Zellig Sabbettai Harris. *A grammar of the Phoenician language*. p. 6. 1990.
9. Edward Clodd, *Story of the Alphabet* (Kessinger) 2003:192ff
10. Caruana, A. A. (1852). *Report on the Phoenician and Roman Antiquities in the Group of the Islands of Malta* (<https://books.google.fr/books?id=M8oNAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA50>). U.S. Government Printing Office. p. 50.
11. Jongeling, K. and Robert Kerr. Late Punic epigraphy. P.10.
12. Benz, Franz L. 1982. Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions. P.12-14
13. Jongeling, K. and Robert Kerr. Late Punic epigraphy. P.2.
14. Hackett 2008, p. 85.
15. Jongeling, K., Robert M. Kerr. 2005. Late Punic epigraphy: an introduction to the study of Neo-Punic and Latino-Punic Inscriptions
16. Segert 1997, p. 175.
17. Krahmalkov, Charles R. (2001). *A Phoenician Punic grammar*. Brill. pp. 20–27. ISBN 9004117717. OCLC 237631007 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/237631007>).
18. Krahmalkov, Charles R. (2000-11-28). *A Phoenician-Punic Grammar* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=DbC9CwAAQBAJ&lpg=PR1&dq=krahmalkov%20phoenician&pg=PA132#v=onepage&q=for%20his%20son&f=false>). BRILL. p. 21. ISBN 9789004294202.
19. Hackett 2008, p. 87.
20. Hackett 2008, p. 86.
21. Segert 1997, p. 59.
22. Kerr, Robert M. 2010. Latino-Punic Epigraphy: A Descriptive Study of the Inscriptions. P.126
23. Segert 1997.
24. Лявданский, А.К. 2009. Финикийский язык. Языки мира: семитские языки. Аккадский язык. Северозападносемитские языки. ред. Белова, А.Г. и др. P.283
25. Kerr, Robert M. 2010 Latino-Punic Epigraphy: A Descriptive Study of the Inscriptions. P.105 ff.
26. Segert 1997, p. 60.
27. Hackett 2008, p. 88.
28. Segert 1997, p. 61.
29. Hackett 2008, p. 89.
30. Segert 1997, p. 63.
31. Stade, Bernhard; Marti, Karl (1970). *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (<https://books.google.fr/books?id=i08KAQAAMAAJ&q=>) (in German). Walter de Gruyter. p. 272.
32. Segert, Stanislav. 2007. Phoenician and Punic Morphology. In Morphologies of Asia and Philippines Morphologies of Asia and Africa. ed. by Alan S. Kaye. P.79
33. Hackett 2008, p. 90.
34. Hackett 2008, p. 85, The description of the pronouns follows Hackett.
35. Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions: M-T Front Cover Jacob Hoftijzer, Karel Jongeling, Richard C. Steiner, Bezalel Porten, Adina Mosak Moshavi P.1176
36. Ugaritische Grammatik, Josef Tropper P.73-80, ISBN 3927120901
37. Die Keilalphabete: die phönizisch-kanaanäischen und altarabischen Alphabete in Ugarit P.162, ISBN 3927120006

38. P.994, http://www.persee.fr/doc/crai_0065-0536_2000_num_144_3_16174.
39. Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions: M-T Front Cover Jacob Hoftijzer, Karel Jongeling, Richard C. Steiner, Bezalel Porten, Adina Mosak Moshavi P.893
40. Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik 3. Auflange P.171, [ISBN 978-8876532597](#)
41. Segert, Stanislav. 2007. Phoenician and Punic Morphology. In Morphologies of Asia and Africa. Morphologies of Asia and Africa. ed. by Alan S. Kaye. P.80
42. [Hackett 2008](#), p. 90, The vocalized reconstructions in the schemes below follow chiefly Hackett.
43. The spellings are based mostly on Segert, Stanislav. 2007. Phoenician and Punic Morphology. In Morphologies of Asia and Africa. Morphologies of Asia and Africa. ed. by Alan S. Kaye. P.82
44. Segert, Stanislav. 2007. Phoenician and Punic Morphology. In Morphologies of Asia and Africa. Morphologies of Asia and Africa. ed. by Alan S. Kaye. P.82
45. [Hackett 2008](#), p. 96.
46. Лявданский, А.К. 2009. Финикийский язык. Языки мира: семитские языки. Аккадский язык. Северозападносемитские языки. ред. Белова, А.Г. и др. P.293
47. [Hackett 2008](#), p. 97.
48. [Hackett 2008](#), p. 99.
49. [Hackett 2008](#), p. 98.
50. Booth, Scott W. (2007). "Using corpus linguistics to address some questionings of Phoenician grammar and syntax found in the Kulamuwa inscription" (https://web.archive.org/web/20110812194619/http://boothhouse.com/content/Booth_Using_Corpus_Linguistics.pdf) (PDF). p. 196. Archived from the original (http://boothhouse.com/content/Booth_Using_Corpus_Linguistics.pdf) (PDF) on August 12, 2011.
51. "Alfabeto fenicio" (<http://www.proel.org/index.php?pagina=alfabetos/fenicio>). *Proel (Promotora Española de Lingüística)* (in Spanish). Retrieved 5 July 2011.
52. Дьяконов И. М (1967). *Языки древней Передней Азии*. Москва: Издательство Наука.
53. "Archived copy" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20051109091842/http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/vtw/jongeling/LATPUN/LPINTRO.htm>). Archived from the original (<http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/vtw/jongeling/latpun/LPINTRO.htm>) on 2005-11-09. Retrieved 2009-08-25.
54. [Lehmann 2013](#), p. 209: Nearly two hundred years later the repertory of Phoenician-Punic epigraphy counts about 10.000 inscriptions from throughout the Mediterranean and its environs. Nevertheless, almost 150 years after Gesenius, Wolfgang Röllig bewailed once more that "notwithstanding the welcome increase of textual material in the past decades, Phoenician probably remains the worst transmitted and least known of all Semitic languages.
55. Lipiński (1995), p.1321-1322
56. [Lehmann 2013](#).
57. [Lehmann 2013](#), p. 240.

Further reading

- Fox, Joshua. "A Sequence of Vowel Shifts in Phoenician and Other Languages." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 55, no. 1 (1996): 37-47. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/545378>.
- Hackett, Joe Ann (2008). "Phoenician and Punic" (https://e-learning.tsu.ge/pluginfile.php/5868/mod_resource/content/0/dzveli_amosavluri_enebi_-ugarituli_punikuri_aramauli_ebrauli_arabuli.pdf#page=104) (PDF). In Woodard, Roger D. (ed.). *The Ancient Languages of Syria-Palestine and Arabia* (https://e-learning.tsu.ge/pluginfile.php/5868/mod_resource/content/0/dzveli_amosavluri_enebi_-ugarituli_punikuri_aramauli_ebrauli_arabuli.pdf) (PDF). Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511486890 (<https://doi.org/10.1017%2FCBO9780511486890>). ISBN 9780511486890.

- Holmstedt, Robert D., and Aaron Schade. *Linguistic Studies In Phoenician: In Memory of J. Brian Peckham*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013.
- Krahmalkov, Charles R. *A Phoenician-Punic Grammar*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Schmitz, Philip C. "Phoenician-Punic Grammar and Lexicography in the New Millennium." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 3 (2004): 533-47.
doi:10.2307/4132279.Copy (<https://doi.org/10.2307%2F4132279.Copy>)
- Segert, S. *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic*. München: C.H. Beck, 1976.
- Segert, Stanislav (October 1997). "Phoenician and the Eastern Canaanite languages" (<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315002682.ch10>). In Hetzron, Robert (ed.). *The Semitic Languages*. Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781315002682.ch10 (<https://doi.org/10.4324%2F9781315002682.ch10>) (inactive 2020-03-12). ISBN 9780415057677.
- Segert, Stanislav (30 June 1997). "Phoenician and Punic phonology" (<https://books.google.es/books?id=T6jmziooEk0C&printsec=frontcover>). In Kaye, Alan S.; Daniels, Peter T. (eds.). *Phonologies of Asia and Africa: (including the Caucasus)*. Eisenbrauns. p. 1041. ISBN 9781575060194. JSTOR 417482 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/417482>).
- Tomback, Richard S. *A Comparative Semitic Lexicon of the Phoenician and Punic Languages*. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1978.
- Tribulato, Olga. *Language and Linguistic Contact In Ancient Sicily*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Woodard, Roger D. *The Ancient Languages of Syria-Palestine and Arabia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Phoenician_language&oldid=969472432"

This page was last edited on 25 July 2020, at 16:54 (UTC).

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.